

USCodex

From: Rebecca Sidebotham [rksideb@calweb.com]
Sent: Tuesday, April 20, 1999 7:32 PM
To: USCodex@dchqexs1.hqnet.usda.gov
Subject: Genetically engineered foods

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Sensitivity: Personal

It has come to my attention that you hold the position that consumers need not be told that products they are consuming are genetically engineered. In my opinion, this information is just as important as knowing whether or not my food is organic, at least pesticide residue-free or could have God-knows-what in it. It seems that produce has entered a new era of, "Let the buyer beware."

I'm particularly concerned about milk. I understand that the milk now being sold is, unless otherwise labeled, probably rbGH milk. My understanding is that this milk does not have identical molecular structure to that of unengineered milk. If that is the case, then I believe consumers should know.

One alteration in the molecule could alter how the body handles the milk and change the nutritional value of the product, not to mention cause side effects just as Progestin, altered progesterone, does not act the same way in the body as the real progesterone molecule and has a plethora of side effects which are absent when real progesterone is used.

Since I have physically experienced the difference between Progestin and progesterone, the idea that my 5-year-old might be drinking milk that doesn't have 100% true milk molecular structure concerns me, so if the milk supply has been boosted using genetic engineering and has somehow been altered in the process, I want to see it prominently displayed on the label of every bottle. I feel the same way about alteration of any food's molecular structure, because contrary to what many would have consumers believe, the change of a single protein can completely alter what the food really is and how the body reacts to it.

By the way, considering the ongoing dairy product surplus in the U.S., why do we even need to use genetic engineering and hormones to increase the production of milk?

I was an enthusiastic supporter of genetic engineering until I learned why Progestin made me sick, namely a minor alteration of a molecule. Progesterone, with no tampering, gives me no side effects. This put the whole idea of genetic engineering in a completely new light for me. Now I want to know if somebody's been messing with molecular structures so I can make an informed choice about whether or not to consume the product.

I understand that C. Everett Koop wrote a position paper about rbGH milk, calling it exactly the same as "wholesome milk." I have never seen this paper. Did the rbGH milk molecules undergo comparison to the molecular structures within pre-engineered milk and match perfectly? If not, then it is NOT exactly the same as nature's original product.

I would like a copy of Dr. Coop's paper. If you can send me a copy, please e-mail it by responding to rksideb@calweb.com, or snail mail it to:

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If you can't provide a copy of the paper, please tell me where I can obtain one, since presumably you have obtained it and read it.

Yours Truly,
Rebecca Sidebotham